

Naperville Sun, September 24, 2004

**Tobacco's toll** - According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, tobacco use is the nation's leading preventable cause of death, killing more than 400,000 people and costing more than \$75 billion in medical bills every year.

Every day, 2,000 kids become regular smokers, one-third of whom will die prematurely as a result, according to the Tobacco-Free Kids group. In Illinois, tobacco use kills 18,400 people and costs more than \$3.2 billion in health care costs each year. More than 29 percent of high school students smoke, and 34,800 kids become regular smokers every year, according to the organization.

The fight against cancer went to Washington, D.C., on Sept. 7, and Terri Butler of Bolingbrook went with it.

For four days, Butler, together with some 300 other cancer fighters from around the nation, met with legislators and talked about ways to counteract the disease.

Butler, a cancer survivor, is chairwoman of the American Cancer Society's North Will County Relay for Life group. Relay for Life sponsors annual events for cancer survivors and their families to raise money for cancer research.

Money is always needed, Butler said, because there are so many different types of cancers to understand, treat and prevent.

The visitors to Washington, most of whom were volunteers affiliated with the American Cancer

Society and the American Lung Association, presented legislators three major requests: more regulation of tobacco products by the Federal Drug Administration, more funding to support patients as they navigate through cancer treatments and larger appropriations for cancer research.

Ongoing cancer research has brought breakthroughs, and new kinds of treatments and drugs are being developed, Butler said. However, a 7 percent or 8 percent increase in funding could do much more, and more quickly, she said.

"But every cancer is different. Even with breast cancer, they are different and need different types of treatments," said Butler, a 13-year survivor of breast cancer.

She recalls how down she felt when she was in the hospital for treatment. But a Road to Recovery volunteer nurse took her by the hand and said she was going to do just fine.

And she did. Soon Butler was coping well and getting involved with the Cancer Society to help others. She hands out literature at community events to promote the society's goals.

The trip to the nation's capital with the campaign to conquer cancer was uplifting, Butler said.

"Absolutely, there is hope, and that's what keeps you going. It keeps every survivor going," she said.

The group, which included 10 from Illinois, paid a visit to U.S. Reps. Judy Biggert and Mark Kirk, who have recently spoken out about the tobacco industry's development of flavored cigarettes.

During the meeting, the group had to run alongside Kirk as he was called out for an important vote in the House. Butler spoke to him about his plans for the fight against cancer as they hurried over to the Capitol. She learned of his deep concern about a new product developed by R.J. Reynolds, a flavored cigarette.

Butler fears such a cigarette could tempt young people to pick up the habit.

On Sept. 17, Kirk, a Republican from Highland Park, joined the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the Cancer Society, the American Lung Association and the American Heart Association at a press conference at the Chicago Children's Museum to call on members of the Illinois congressional delegation to give the FDA authority over tobacco products.

"The proliferation of candy-flavored cigarettes is a highly disturbing trend that shows the tobacco industry is still targeting our children," Kirk said at the press conference.

"Congress has the historic opportunity to pass legislation that not only gives the FDA authority to regulate tobacco products, but also protects taxpayers from bailing out tobacco farmers. The Dewine-Kennedy amendment of the Foreign Sales Corp. bill forces tobacco companies, not taxpayers, to pay for the buyout of tobacco farmers," Kirk said.

He urged that the Dewine-Kennedy amendment be approved. If that happens, it would be a landmark success in the fight against cancer, Butler said.

The tobacco companies say they have become more responsible marketers since the 1998 state tobacco settlement, which prohibited the companies from taking "any action, directly or indirectly, to target youth ... in the advertising, promotion or marketing of tobacco products."

However, the tobacco companies increased their nationwide marketing by 66 percent in the three years after the settlement, to a record \$11.45 billion a year, or \$31.4 million a day, according to the Federal Trade Commission's most recent annual report on tobacco marketing.

R.J. Reynolds launched an ad campaign this summer around its new pineapple-and-coconut-flavored cigarette, Kauai Kolada, and its citrus-flavored cigarette, Twista Lime, which was immediately condemned by public health experts nationwide as targeting kids, Butler said.

Earlier this year, the Brown and Williamson Tobacco Co. also launched a line of candy-flavored cigarettes with names like Caribbean Chill, Midnight Berry, Mocha Taboo and Mintrigue.

"Despite their names and flavors, these cigarettes contain the same tobacco and are just as addictive and just as harmful as other cigarettes," said Sarah Silhan, spokeswoman for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

"We are distressed that tobacco products, which cause so much death and disease, are not regulated to protect our health and safety," said Joel Africk, chief executive officer of the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago, in a news release.

"Almost everything Americans eat or drink is regulated by the FDA, yet a product that kills 400,000 Americans a year - a product that contains arsenic, formaldehyde and other lethal poisons - has so far escaped government oversight. Our U.S. senators and representatives need to protect our kids and our health by giving the FDA effective authority over tobacco products," Africk said.

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